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March 16, 2018

Testimony before the Public Health Committee regarding:

**S.B. No. 302 AN ACT CONCERNING TELEHEALTH SERVICES**  
**H.B. No. 5299 AN ACT CONCERNING TELEHEALTH PRESCRIBING FOR TREATMENT OF PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS**

Good afternoon Senators Gerratana and Somers, Representative Steinberg and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Suzi Craig and I lead advocacy efforts at Mental Health Connecticut (MHC), a non-profit organization providing advocacy, education, and residential and wellness services.

According to an IHS Technology report, the telemedicine services field is “positioned to explode by 2018 with an anticipated 7 million patient users, up from 350,000 patient users in 2013.”

There is no doubt that telehealth will be an important component in the future and MHC supports the evolution in health care to the digital space for both behavioral and physical health. Increasing access to care is critical to many of our program participants who live in rural areas, are confined to their homes, and who may have co-occurring health conditions.

Beyond our full support of increasing access to care through telehealth means, bill HB 5299 has some language that we believe needs to be examined further. It prohibits a telehealth provider from “prescribing any schedule I, II or III controlled substances for the treatment of chronic nonmalignant pain.” We assume that this provision is connected to a valiant effort to ensure that opioids are not freely prescribed.

While we absolutely applaud and support the effort to combat the opioid epidemic, we want to point out that individuals with chronic pain are typically unable to leave the house to seek treatment. We want to encourage the Committee to find other solutions to address the needs of individuals who are unable to access care due to health conditions that keep them confined to their homes.

One last note: the more we explore the adoption of health care services via the Internet, it will be important to also support initiatives to increase broadband services. Any legislation on telehealth care will fall flat if online access is unreliable or not available. It might be worth a look at an FCC initiative called “[Connect2Health](#),” which is mapping data that will show the intersection of broadband and access to healthcare.

Thank you for your service,

Suzi Craig  
Senior Director of Policy